

ICSU Panel on World Data Centers
Birmingham, England
July 21, 1999
Meeting Summary

Attendance

Panel: Ferris Webster (chair), Alexei Gvishiani (vice chair), Anne Linn (secretary), Stan Ruttenberg (treasurer), G. Sobolev (Russia representative), Tohru Araki (Japan representative), Keyun Tang (for Sun Honglie, China representative), Herb Kroehl (WDC director representative), Dave Clark (assistant secretary), and Yuri Tyupkin (assistant secretary)

Guests: E. Bridges (WDC for Soils), Bernard Ducarme (WDC for Earth Tides), Brian Fraser (University of Newcastle), Allen Hittelman (WDC for Solid Earth Geophysics, Boulder), Toshihiko Iyemori (WDC for Geomagnetism, Kyoto), Gurbax Lakhina (WDC for Geomagnetism, Mumbai), Oliver Merrington (WDC for Glaciology, Cambridge), Ole Rasmussen (WDC for Geomagnetism, Copenhagen), and Richard Thompson (Ionospheric Prediction Service, Australia)

Meeting handouts

- Agenda
- 1998 WDC annual report
- Address list of WDC panel and directors
- Suggestions for an All WDC conference
- Guidelines for opening a WDC
- Proposal for a WDC for Land Cover Data, Sioux Falls
- Proposal for a WDC for Solar Terrestrial Physics, Haymarket
- Proposal for a virtual WDC for Geodynamics Aspects of Geodesy and Gravity, Moscow
- *History of Database Protection: Legal Issues of Concern to the Scientific Community*
- Summary information on Japan WDCs

1. Review of Panel activities since the last Panel meeting

Webster went over the highlights of the 1998 annual report, then Ruttenberg discussed the budget. The Panel has approximately \$30,000 USD to spend on meetings, data rescue, and an All WDC Conference. The last conference cost approximately \$50,000 USD, and the Panel expects to raise the difference from non-ICSU sources. This year's allowance from ICSU is \$8,000 USD, which is the same amount the Panel received last year.

Linn reviewed the address list of WDC directors. Since the list was last updated a few years ago, 13 new WDC directors have been appointed, including 1 in the United States, 2 in Russia, 2 in Europe, 3 in Japan and India, and 5 in China. Two WDCs are currently inactive: the organization hosting the WDC for Seismology, Denver, is reorganizing and will name a new WDC director shortly. The WDC for Recent Crustal Motions in the Czech Republic became inactive following a reorganization in 1995 and no longer responds to emails or faxes. Ducarme noted that the IAG is making a decision about the host Czech geodetic observatory at the IUGG meeting.

Ducarme will attend the IAG meeting and report the decision on the geodetic observatory and WDC to the WDC panel.

2. Plans for the second All WDC Conference

The Panel reviewed the suggestions from WDC directors and Clark discussed the recommendations from a WDC working group meeting in the United States. Gvishiani suggested that the All WDC conference be held at the University of Moscow in fall 2000. Washington, DC, would serve as a back-up if that proved not feasible or difficult. (China volunteered to hold the following one, after the reorganization of the centers and new budget are in place.) The theme of the 1999 conference will be creating a network of centers with defined levels of performance. (Individual centers could choose their level of performance.) In advance of the conference, a task group will develop a draft set of requirements for WDCs, including quality of service, holdings, web page specifications, etc. The requirements will be refined and adopted at the All WDC conference.

The Panel will appoint a task group to draft the levels of performance this summer. Tyupkin will look into the feasibility of holding the next All WDC Conference in Moscow.

After the WDC system has operated under these new guidelines for a few years, the Panel will sponsor a review of the WDC system. The review will focus on how individual centers could be improved, and they will be conducted by international panels. Such reviews are beneficial to data centers because (1) they yield helpful advice on data center operations, (2) they raise the visibility of the center with the funding organization and ICSU, and (3) the reviewers commonly become users and advocates of the center. The overall result would be a stronger WDC system.

3. New WDC components: meeting the needs of IGBP, WCRP, and other scientific programs

Eight organizations have proposed creating new WDCs. Four expressed interest, but have not produced a formal proposal:

- WDC for marine environmental data
proposed by Hannes Grobe, Alfred Wegener Inst. for Polar and Marine Research
- WDC for hydrology
proposed by WDC for Meteorology, Asheville
- WDC for land use/land cover change
proposed by Xavier Baulies, Institute of Cartography, Barcelona
- WDC for atmospheric trace gases and global topography
proposed by Gunter Schreier, German Aerospace Center

Linn will check with the above organizations to see if they are still interested in creating a new WDC.

The WDC for Land Remote Sensing proposed to either create a new WDC for land use/land cover change, or to expand its charter to include new data sets. A new center would require a formal proposal, site visit, and endorsement from a scientific body.

Linn will seek further information from the WDC for Land Remote Sensing.

The WDC for Paleoclimatology has been trying to collaborate with START to create a paleoclimatic research data element in Africa. The WDC Panel obtained \$4,000 USD from ICSU to help with this activity, but it has proven extremely difficult to make progress.

Webster will work with the WDC for Paleoclimatology to help get this activity underway.

Fraser, representing the IPS Radio & Space Services in Australia, presented a proposal to create a WDC for solar terrestrial physics, Haymarket. The Panel gave the center conditional approval, pending the successful outcome of a site visit.

IPS Radio & Space Services will arrange a site visit, and Webster will ask a representative of the Panel to participate.

Tyupkin presented a proposal to create a virtual WDC for geodynamics aspects of geodesy and gravity, Moscow. Such a center would build off the existing capabilities of the Moscow data center complex. The Panel gave the center approval to plan a site visit. Because this would be only the second virtual center in the WDC system, several Panel members will participate in the site visit.

The National Geophysical Committee will arrange a site visit, and Webster will ask several representatives of the Panel to participate.

4. WDC home page

Data centers in China, Australia, or Japan interested in creating a mirror site for the WDC home page should contact Allen Hittelman, WDC for Solid Earth Geophysics, Boulder. In addition, any data center with new WWW addresses should send them to Hittelman or Linn.

5. Data access

Linn gave an overview of her paper *History of Database Protection: Legal Issues of Concern to the Scientific Community*. The European Database Directive (now law in 9 countries and similar legislation is being considered around the world) would require users to pay and/or obtain permission to use more than insubstantial parts of a database. This new kind of intellectual property right could make it more difficult and/or expensive for scientists to obtain and use data. Webster noted that ICSU is very concerned about this legislation, and the ICSU/CODATA Group on Data and Information has been representing the scientific community in meetings of the World Intellectual Property Organization.

6. Other business

The WDC-A, -B, -C1, -C2, -D designation no longer serves a purpose and has been dropped. From now on, in the case of more than one center for the same discipline, the WDCs will be differentiated using the name of their city (e.g., WDC for Geomagnetism, Edinburgh).

A new email list of WDC directors will be maintained at the Secretariat in Washington. The old list (wdc_org@ngdc.noaa.gov), which was out of date and experiencing technical problems, has been disabled.

Linn will create a new WDC email list and send the address to the directors within a few weeks.

Araki presented a proposal to change the name of the WDC for Solar Terrestrial Activity, Kanagawa, to the WDC for Space Science Satellites, Kanagawa. The mission of the center has not changed, but the old name had become outdated. The Panel approved the name change.